

Press Release For Immediate Distribution

January 21, 2004

DOING MORE, WITH LESS

In 2003, the Lake County Recorder's Office realized \$3.14M in total revenue. Total revenue was up 188% over 2000 and a startling 65% over the record year of 2002.

[Painesville, OH] – Combine a hot refinancing market, with record low interest rates, add in a State mandate doubling recorder fees and its no wonder 2003 was one for the record books with regard to total revenue in the Lake County Recorder's office. By the first week of September, fueled by the non-stop flurry of refinancing, deed filings, and mortgages filed, the Lake County Recorder's office surpassed the previous annual gross revenue record that was established in 2002.

For the year ending January 2, 2004, the Lake County Recorder's Office realized \$3,418,020 in total revenue as a result of 88,513 documents recorded and/or filed. The previous annual record for revenue generated was in 2002 when \$2,076,994 was realized as a result of processing 75,122 transactions. The office handled 18% more transactions than the previous record year of 2002 resulting in a 65% increase in gross revenue this past year.

A sure delight to Lake County Commissioners was the fact that the actual 2003 general fund revenue was \$400,000 more than 2002 and \$1.2M more than the year of 2000. “We had conservatively estimated general fund revenue around \$1.1M based on historical averages, but its difficult to project the future volume of transactions, as transactional volume is usually a function of the movement of interest rates.”

“Ohio Legislators doubling the Recorder’s fees was a major factor in the revenue increase as Lake County taxpayers expended an additional \$882,536 due to the State legislation that went into effect August 1st. According to the Ohio Revised Code, 1% of the Ohio Housing Trust Funds collected, or \$8,825, were retained by the County for the Recorder’s use. “

“The office reached its filing peak in mid summer with the seven week period ending August 1st when the Recorder’s office processed 14,735 transactions. Ironically, Ohio State legislators doubled recording fees effective August 1, 2003 to enable funding of the Ohio Housing Trust Fund.

“2003 was the busiest year this office has been since the office was created and the doors opened in the 1800’s. The two-year period consuming both 2002 and 2003 was one heck of a run for the low interest rates. The consistent lower mortgage rates have really propped up the overall national economy and enabled many families to save cash flow through refinancing their existing property that has resulted in lower monthly mortgage payments. Obviously, many in Lake County took advantage of that.

Total revenue realized by the Lake County Recorder's office in 2000 was \$1,186,397, yet in 2003 it was \$3.418M. Total revenue in 2003 was up an alarming 188% over 2000 with a 50% increase in transactional activity. "The amazing fact about all of this is that the office handled a 50% increase in transactional volume with exactly the same number of full-time staff, and at only 8% more than the operating costs incurred in 2000.

"The employees in this office really reached deep down and given there all in 2003, committed 100% of their efforts, and realized many efficiencies through new streamlined internal procedures. They have performed beyond anyone's expectations. It really is hard for anyone to argue that processing 50% more work, with the same level of staffing, is not efficient management."

The run on Recorder filings appeared to have considerably slowed down around mid October. "Now that we have had two months to catch our collective breathe, we will be, and are ready, for the next wave of filings, should they occur in 2004."

For further information on this press release, call Lake County Recorder Frank Saponic at 440-350-2508 in the morning or 440-449-6800 in the afternoon.

###